“THE EVENT OF DEATH”

We begin with two events – two deaths, in fact. The first is the death of the Roman Stoic Seneca. After a complicated history as an imperial adviser to Nero, Seneca was ordered to commit suicide by that infamous Roman emperor. Affirming this fate, Seneca cut an artery on his arm in an attempt to bleed to death. Since he was so old and frail, however, his arteries were weak and barely able to pump blood; death would not be so easy for Seneca. He thus cut arteries on his leg and behind his knees, yet even this did not kill him. Mirroring the famous Socratic manner of death, Seneca then asked for hemlock. Painfully, the hemlock also did not bring the mortal relief. As a last resort, “having been carried into the bath, [. . .] he was asphyxiated by the steam, [and] cremated without any of the solemnity of a funeral.” The warm waters finally brought about the event of Seneca’s death. The second death is the suicide of Gilles Deleuze. On Saturday, 4 November 1995, after years of pain and suffering, Deleuze leapt from the window of his third-floor apartment, on Avenue Niel in Paris’s seventeenth arrondissement. Similar to what he wrote of Beckett, Deleuze had been exhausted by the effects of a lifelong respiratory illness, a tracheotomy, and attacks of suffocation that left him “chained like a dog” to an oxygen machine. In those last few months, he could barely speak or even hold a pen. Defenestration was the evental form of his death. For Seneca and Deleuze, suicide is an event, and as such it is intimately two-sided, simultaneously the most personal and the most impersonal act. Deleuze cites Blanchot in describing “suicide as the wish to bring about the conscience of the two faces of death.” The double-sided form of suicide allows us to bring together these two faces of death, two double-sided events, a dual death.
This twofold character, along with the ever-so-thin threshold separating and connecting these two sides, creates a continuous crack in the event. This crack is expressed in the paradoxical Stoic theory of incorporeals and further emphasized in Deleuze’s reading of Stoic ontology. In this essay, we explore this strand of the Deleuze-Stoic encounter.

Deleuze explains that the “privileged place assigned to the Stoics is due to their having been the initiators of a new image of the philosopher which broke away from the pre-Socratics, Socratic philosophy, and Platonism.” In third-century Rome, a very intriguing double-headed statue expressed these opposed lineages. On one side of the statue is the face of Socrates, on the opposite side is Seneca. Although they share one brain, they engage the world in opposite directions. Each man drank the hemlock, but only one found it deadly. Both are attached along a crack “without thickness,” joining and dividing these two faces of philosophy at the backs of their respective heads. Deleuze’s encounter with Stoicism begins at this dimensionless border separating Socrates and Seneca. This statue, especially its double-sided structure, expresses the way in which Stoicism initiates a new manner of doing philosophy. This new philosophical manner sparks an alternative philosophical lineage, “a minor tradition,” which eventually provokes many of the essential features of Deleuze’s own thought.

STOIC ONTOLOGY AND SOMETHING

Keeping with the image of the double-headed statue, let us contrast Platonic and Stoic ontologies. Contra Plato, Seneca writes: “Some Stoics think that the primary genus is ‘something’ [quid].” The Stoics do not contrast nothing and “being” (όυσία); they contrast nothing and something. Like the Greek Stoics before him, “I [Seneca] divide ‘what is’ into three species: things are corporeal or incorporeal; there is no third possibility.” While it might seem strange that Seneca says there are three species but only lists two, the third species plays more of a polemical role, designating things that do not exist, fictional entities such as Plato’s transcendent forms. In fairness, it is not even a third category, but more of a catch-all trash bin for fantastical creatures, or any “bit of Plato’s personal baggage.”

The real distinction in “something” is modal. Corporeals and incorporeals are both species of something, they are both real, but only corporeals exist. Stoicism is very clear on this point: to be is to be a body. Existence and corporeality are coextensive. Contrary to Platonism, there is no immaterial existence in Stoicism. From beginning to end, Stoicism is a thoroughgoing materialism. The Stoics redeploy the suggestion of Plato’s Sophist to their own materialist ends. Plato ventriloquizes, “a thing really is if it has any capacity at all [. . .] to do something to something else or to have even the smallest thing done to it.” Deleuze (and Spinoza) would agree: to be means to have the capacity act or be acted upon. For the Stoics, only bodies can act and be acted upon.
To exist thus means to be able to engage in causal relations, to bring about effects in and to suffer effects from other bodies. Émile Bréhier, one of the two major influences on Deleuze’s encounter with Stoicism, notes that this thesis, another divergence from Platonism, “renders ideal causality completely impossible.”

The Stoics postulate another ontological category. While everything is something (every existing thing is a something), something includes that which is beyond body but is not transcendently ideal: incorporeals. Incorporeals are not transcendent forms; immanence characterizes them as much as it characterizes bodies. The difference is that, while incorporeals do not exist, they do subsist (ὑφίστασθαι). Subsistence is neither being nor nothing, but somewhere between both. John Sellars calls them “non-existent realities.” To differentiate it from Plato’s forms, Deleuze sometimes calls this kind of immanent reality “insistence.”

Zeno of Citium thought that “it was quite impossible for anything to be acted on by something entirely without body,” while Cicero reports, “neither what acts nor what it acts on could be incorporeal.” Neither active nor passive, Deleuze calls incorporeals “impassive.” While existent bodies have a causal character, incorporeals are not inscribed within the order of causation (which is why Deleuze describes them as effects). Corporeals and incorporeals are both real, insofar as they are both kinds of something, but they are modally different. “The Stoics,” Deleuze writes, “are in the process of tracing out and forming a frontier where there had not been one before.” Through the construction of this strange ontological frontier, the Stoics “transcend the experiential dimensions of the visible without falling into [transcendent] Ideas.” This frontier or surface is the means by which Stoic ontology initiates a new manner of philosophizing.

With this ontological surface, Stoic ontology flattens out the heights of Plato’s transcendent metaphysics. No longer is there an ascending movement from depths to height, from particulars to universals, from the darkness of the cave to the bright light of the sun. Instead, the Stoics construct the concept of a flat surface, as paradoxical as it is, that allows continuous passage from corporeals to incorporeals and back again. Distributing the verticality of Platonism onto a single horizontal plane inaugurates a new mode of philosophy, and Deleuze considers this to be an entirely original Stoic achievement, one that further entails an entire ethics.

While Deleuze suggests that Plato shows the direction for an overturning of Platonism, “the Stoics,” he clearly states, “are the first to reverse Platonism.” Recall the two-faced statue: Socrates faces in one direction, perhaps staring up into the height of the transcendent domain, but Seneca looks out in the opposite direction, following the flat surface of something as it stretches out into the distance, perhaps even folding back on itself in the form of a Möbius strip, eternally returning. To give us a concrete image to hold in mind as we progress, we can think of the Stoic surface as the paradoxical middle of the two faces of the Möbius strip.
THE “FOUR” INCORPOREALS

On the traditional reading, the Stoics postulate four types of incorporeals: “[I] sayable [λεκτόν], [II] void, [III] place [τόπον], and [IV] time.” Part of our argument, though, will be to show how, in the Deleuze-Stoicism encounter, there are not four but three incorporeals: I. Space, II. Λεκτά, III. Time. We begin with void and place.

Space = [I] Void + [II] Place

Sextus clearly explains void and place: “The Stoics say that void is what can be occupied by an existent but is not occupied [. . .] place is what is occupied by an existent [body] and made equal to what occupies it.” In the extant fragments, the Stoics do not seem concerned that place and void are really only two dimensions of the same concept: space. Place is occupied space; void is empty space. Where bodies are, space subsists; where bodies are not, void subsists. Since place is defined in relation to bodies, it is finite; place subsists as equal in size to the body that occupies it. Void, however, subsists completely independently of bodies, functioning as the empty space outside of all bodies, beyond the totality of “what is,” τὸ ὄν, infinitely extending out from the corporeal world in all directions. While place is finite and limited, void is infinite and unlimited.

In order to ensure change in time and space, void and place are necessary. Since they cannot be bodies (for two bodies cannot occupy the same place), void and place are rendered incorporeal, capable neither of acting nor being acted upon. The subsistence of void and place is characterized as “giving way,” relenting, unable to offer any kind of resistance. Void yields to bodies and becomes place, and place becomes void when emptied of bodies.

While Deleuze does not write much about void and place, focusing instead on time and Λεκτά, we should not pass over this pair of incorporeals too quickly. As we claimed above and will argue below, void and place are two dimensions of the same concept: space. That is, void and place are not two separate types of incorporeals, but are instead two dimensions of one kind of incorporeal. Space is thus the generic name for this first Stoic incorporeal; it is the ever-so-thin cleft separating and connecting void and place. As we will find, this fissure runs throughout the Deleuze-Stoicism encounter.

Λεκτά

A common English translation of λεκτόν is “sayable,” and Émile Bréhier translates it with the French word exprimable (“expressible”). Λεκτόν is the first term in the Stoic philosophy of language. As this is a materialist account, things begin with bodies, in this case the mouth’s production of sounds, which are themselves physical things. Deleuze cites one of Chrysippus’ paradoxes: “If you say something, it passes through your lips: now you say wagon, consequently a wagon passes through your lips.”
In order to work through this paradox and discover the Stoic philosophy of language, consider this sentence: “Deleuze has died.” The sentence is attributed to a certain state of affairs in the world, although the death subsists only in the writing. In the world, we find only a collection of bodies – an open window, a warm corpse, reddening pavement, confused onlookers, etc. Strangely, there is no death among these bodies. Death does not exist in the world. In the world, there are only bodies intermixing with other bodies, with nouns and adjectives to denote them. Death only subsists in words, such that death is an event expressed by a verb, that is “to die.” The sense of the sentence subsists at the thin threshold between the word and the world. Deleuze writes, “physical bodies and sonorous words are separated and articulated at once by an incorporeal frontier. This frontier is sense, representing, on one side, the pure ‘expressed’ of words, and on the other, the logical attribute of bodies.”

Bodies are the corporeal finite things, and sense is the infinite expanse playing along the surface of states of affairs.

Now consider the sense expressed in Seneca’s “death.” In Seneca’s last hours, there was a cutting into flesh by a knife. Bréhier mentions cutting in a passage that Deleuze later cites at length:

So when the scalpel cuts the flesh, the first body produces on the second not a new property but a new attribute, that of being cut. The attribute, strictly speaking, does not designate any real quality . . ., it is always, to the contrary, expressed by a verb, that is to say it is not a being, but a way of being . . . This way of being finds itself in some way at the limit, at the surface of being, and it is not able to change its nature: it is, in fact, neither active nor passive, because passivity presupposed a corporeal nature which undergoes an action. It is purely and simply a result, or an effect which is not classified among beings.

A cut, like a death, is an incorporeal event. When the knife cuts the skin, we do not say that the knife gave the skin a new quality. Instead, we say that the state of affairs that includes the knife and the skin is not the same as it was. Before, the knife was above the skin; after, the knife is in the divided space of the skin that has acquired the attribute of being a wound. Bréhier explains, “there are no new realities, properties, but only [new] attributes.” The skin has the attribute of “having been cut,” and the knife has the attribute of “having cut.” Nouns denote the various organizations of the states of affairs. The cut, however, expressed by the infinitive verb (“to cut,” couper) never exists among the corporeal state of affairs, for it is an incorporeal event. It never happens in the world of bodies, but is always what has already happened or is yet to happen. It is neither the active body (knife) nor the passive body (skin), but instead arises as their shared effect. While “wound” and “scar” are qualities of bodies, both nouns, “to cut” is not corporeal, but is rather a verb that contributes an attribute to a body. What it attributes to bodies is an infinitely
divisible event that subsists on a frail frontier that leads off in two directions, into the inaccessible past and the unreachable future.

Seneca thus never cuts his arm or leg. It is rather that his skin has already been, or was yet to be, cut. The cut never happens, but subsists as a verb that can be attributed to bodies. Even after several arteries had been severed, he still had to wait for the next event – death. Death, too, never arrives. Seneca never dies, but always “is about to die” or “has died.” Death is an impersonal instant that is never present but remains a future that never arrives or a past that has always already passed. “The event is that no one ever dies, but has always just died or is always going to die.” For Blanchot, a significant influence on Deleuze’s thinking of death, death is impersonal, incorporeal, and infinitive, contained in the verb “to die” (mourir). “Death,” Deleuze writes, “has an extreme and definite relation to me and my body and is grounded in me, but also has no relation to me at all.”

Death is immanent but never present in a state of affairs, just as verbs are immanent but never existent in the nouns through which verbs conjugate. Although neither Seneca nor Deleuze ever died, they are now dead. There is no subject in death. Like the infinite verb, death is impersonal and pre-subjective. Deleuze refers to this as the splendor of the fourth person expressed in phrases such as “it rains” (il pleut) or “it snows” (il neige): “The they [on] of the pure event wherein it dies [il meurt] does in the same way that it rains [il pleut].”

Deleuze pushes the analysis further, prioritizing death to a special evental status. Rather than death being like any other event, “every event,” Deleuze writes, “is like death.” “To die” is the singular form of the frontier between two domains – life and death – that never relate to each other. Life and death cannot touch.

Let us push Deleuze even further, and consider the eventual status of Seneca and Deleuze’s form of death: suicide. Not only is every event like death, but every death and every event is like suicide. While Seneca cuts his arms and legs, he is both active and passive. Suicide brings together activity and passivity in a single body, which is what makes it so personal. Yet the death of suicide, like any death, never happens, which makes suicide so impersonal. Suicide, Deleuze writes, is “impersonal death by means of the most personal act.” As such, suicide comes closest to bringing death (“to die,” mourir) to the present, to now (maintenant), although this frontier is never crossed. Bodies and events, like nouns and verbs, are separated by that same surface without thickness that slips through all of Stoic ontology. The second name of this surface is λεκτόν, the second incorporeal.

Deleuze’s account of sense emerges out of his encounter with the Stoic concept of λεκτόν. As with λεκτά, Deleuze sees sense as the “expressed of the proposition.” For him, sense is neither body nor nothing. It is something. Similar to what Blanchot says about suicide, it is both personal and impersonal; it is what we mean when we speak, but it is also more than that. Since sense exceeds any one person’s concept, it is not reducible to a conceptual, sensible, or rational representation, all of which the Stoics consider corporeal. The sense
of language subsisted prior to each of us, and it will subsist after death. This is why Deleuze claims that the genetic power of sense “is an impasive and incorporeal entity, without physical or mental existence, neither acting nor being acted upon.”

Sextus says it well:

The Stoics said that three things are linked together, the thing signified and the thing signifying and the thing existing; and of these the thing signifying is the utterance ([“Deleuze”] for instance); and the thing signified is the actual thing indicated thereby and which we apprehend as subsisting in dependence on our intellect, whereas foreigners although hearing the utterance do not understand it; and the thing existing is the external object, such as [Deleuze] himself. And of these, two are bodies – that is, the utterance and the existing thing – and one is incorporeal, namely the thing signified and sayable [λεκτόν], and this too is true or false.

The λεκτά form a fragile frontier subsisting between pairs of existing bodies; it is what is expressed in, but is not reducible to, an articulated proposition. In between two existing bodies, the signifier and the signified, are the subsistent, incorporeal λεκτά. The key is that λεκτά do not subsist outside of the proposition and its referent. Instead, they inhere or subsist in words. Λεκτά thus have two dimensions, according to the two major kinds of words. Similar to the way in which void and place are two dimensions of space, the verbal and the nominal are two dimensions of λεκτά – verbs express subsistent events and nouns denote existent bodies. As void is unlimited space and place is limited space, verbs are infinitive and unlimited λεκτά and nouns are finite and limited λεκτά. So far, we have seen two primary kinds of incorporeals, and there is one more to cover.

**Time**

Time is the final incorporeal of Stoic theory. In order to appreciate the full breadth of this ancient-contemporary encounter, we start with Zeno of Citium, the one who founded this ancient philosophical school on that painted porch (ἡ ποικίλη στοά), and map the production of this notion of time through the complicated Stoic account and up to Deleuze himself.

Zeno’s definition of time seems to echo Aristotle’s definition. In the *Physics*, Aristotle says time is the “number of motion [ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως] with reference to before and after.” Similarly, “Zeno said time is the dimension [διάστημα] of all motion without qualification [ἁπλῶς].” Still, while they both define time in relation to motion, there is an important difference: Zeno does not retain the element of calculation or numbering in his definition. Aristotle’s account depends more on a counting of what came before and what came after, by how much or how little. Zeno, by contrast, puts time in relation to
motion as such, without calculation and without number. Time, for Zeno, is the dimension of motion that is irreducible to quantitative measurement. Unquantified or unqualified movement distributes time not in terms of discrete numbers, but in terms of speed and slowness. Already in Zeno, there is a shift in the ancient thinking of time from quantitative to qualitative measurement, or what Deleuze might call a move from an extensive to an intensive measure of time.

After Zeno, “Chrysippus said time [χρόνον] is [. . .] the dimension [διάστημα] of motion [κινήσεως] accompanying the world’s [τοῦ κόσμου] motion.” With this definition, Chrysippus develops Zeno’s definition in two important ways. First, notice the difference between saying that time is “of” motion, and that it is the dimension “accompanying” motion. When Zeno says that time is the dimension of motion, he implies that movement has a discrete extension, that is it has a determinate beginning and an end, such as five meters, or two kilometers. Although Zeno starts to make the measure of time more intensive, at least compared to Aristotle, for him time is still discontinuous. Chrysippus and all later Stoics, however, complete the transition to the intensive and render time continuous. This is accomplished by means of the second way in which Chrysippus extends Zeno’s definition: he connects time to the world’s motion, the movement of the κόσμος. The κόσμος, for the Stoics, is infinite in that it endlessly turns in a cycle. Connecting time to the infinite and continuous motion of the cosmic cycles ensures that time is also infinite and continuous. Thus with Chrysippus, time becomes truly continuous.

So far, we have seen that Stoicism, after Zeno, sees time as materially continuous, that is there are no gaps in time. Time is a smooth and unending surface. Stoics also posit time as structurally continuous, that is as infinitely divisible. Against the Epicureans, the Stoics grant no end to the process of cutting time, space, matter, or motion into smaller and smaller parts. “Chrysippus said that bodies are divided to infinity, and likewise things comparable to bodies, such as surface, line, place, void and time.” While the materially continuous nature of time entails the infinite stretching of time into the past and future, the structurally continuous nature of time entails some seemingly paradoxical accounts of the present.

If time is infinitely divisible, then the present can be divided endlessly:

[Chrysippus] says most clearly that no time [χρόνος] is wholly present [δόλως ἐνίσταται]. For since continuous things are infinitely divisible [τομή], on the basis of this division every time too is infinitely divisible. Consequently no time is present exactly, but it is broadly [κατὰ πλάτος] said to be so.

Speaking precisely, time is never present. This is clear for the future and the past. The future and the past cannot, by definition, be present. If they were, they would be the present, and not the future or past. The rub is that this infinite divisibility also applies to the present. Although the present, broadly
speaking, seems constituted by part of the past and part of the future, these parts can be divided endlessly. Continuous division implies that the present never is. Hence the paradoxical conclusion: the present is never present, now is never now. This is where Deleuze enters the scene: the present “is subdivided ad infinitum into something that has just happened and something that is going to happen, always flying in both directions at once.” Like death, the present never exists, but is instead the nonexistent limit or frontier that endlessly decomposes into the past and the future; it “is” simply the border at which the past and the future meet and separate. We now have some provocative conclusions: since present, past, and future do not exist, time does not exist. Deleuze calls this understanding of time Aion, from αἰών.

Interestingly, the Stoics add a further complication to the paradoxes of time. As soon as they claim that the present is not real, and so never exists, they also say the very opposite of that: “only the present exists [ὑπάρχειν].” The present is real, it seems, but not the past or the future. “The past and the future,” they continue, “subsist [ὑφεστάναι], but exist in no way.” The present thus has a limited “extension or duration” into which past and future are gathered together or absorbed. In the extended present, “one part of the present time is future and the other past.” The extension of the present can both expand and contract. It can expand out to the present day, the present year, even expanding out until it encompasses the time of all bodies, or it can contract down so that it encompasses the time of a single body, however large or small it is. However vast or slim, the present has a finite extension. Deleuze calls this reading of time Chronos, from χρόνος.

Chronos and Aion

While most ancient scholars attempt to explain away the apparent conflict in the Stoic theory of time by stressing one of the two sides of the paradox, at the end of the day they often conclude that the theory is irresolvably fraught. Deleuze, however, does not try to explain away the paradox, but instead sees great power therein. Rather than try to resolve the dynamic tension of the Stoic theory of time, Deleuze greatly appreciates how the Stoic way of formulating problems generates challenging and dynamic concepts: “The genius of a philosophy must first be measured by the new distribution which it imposes on beings and concepts,” and this is something that Stoicism accomplishes with their ontology of incorporeals. In Deleuze’s eyes, Stoicism is not hopelessly doomed, but instead produces provocative ways of thinking about time, beyond the shadows cast by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

The two parts of the paradox of the Stoic theory of time lead Deleuze to conclude:

Time must be grasped twice, in two complementary [complémentaires] though mutually exclusive fashions. First, it must be grasped entirely as the living present in bodies that act and are acted upon. Second, it must be grasped entirely as an entity infinitely divisible into past
and future [. . .] Only the present exists in time and gathers together or absorbs the past and future. But only the past and future inhere in time and divide each present infinitely. These are not three successive dimensions, but two simultaneous [simultanées] readings of time.\(^{14}\)

In Deleuze’s eyes, the cleavage that acts as the dividing surface between these two seemingly incommensurable accounts of time seems to require two different readings of time. As noted above, Deleuze adapts two classical names for these two readings: Aion and Chronos.

At this point we must be precise in our understanding of the role of time in the Deleuze-Stoicism encounter. We must ask: is Deleuze right in claiming that there are really two different readings of time in Stoicism, Aion and Chronos? Or does it unjustifiably force the Stoics to say something they themselves would not say? Of course we could flippantly refer to Deleuze's famous remark about the buggery of the history of philosophy, it is necessary to remember the most important feature of this reflection on his encounters: “I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for me for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying.”\(^{15}\) Let us test whether Deleuze does in fact meet his personal standard of creatively and sensitively engaging with the Stoic theory of time.

Reading the extant passages concerning time attributed to Zeno, Chrysippus, and the other early Stoics, we do not find a single use of the word “\(\alphaίων\)” that has the sense of Deleuze’s Aion. The only place in which this term appears, in a way, is in Marcus Aurelius’ Meditations, which was written centuries after the deaths of Zeno and Chrysippus. This is where Victor Goldschmidt, the other major influence on Deleuze’s Stoic encounter, and the thinker with the greatest impact on Deleuze’s engagement with the Stoic theory of time, turns in order to claim that the Stoics had two distinct accounts of time. Goldschmidt argues that the reason why we do not see two distinct accounts of time in the early Stoics is because Chrysippus had a “negligence with his terminology, [which] we can say was repaired by Marcus Aurelius.”\(^{16}\) Thus Goldschmidt points to a few passages in the Meditations that demonstrate how both \(\alphaίων\) and \(\underline{\alphaπ\varphi\alphaος}\) (the former standardly translated as “eternity” or “age,” the latter as “infinite” or “endless”), because they both can refer to eternity and the infinite past and future, are linked.\(^{17}\) At the same time, John Sellars notes, Goldschmidt overlooks many passages where Marcus Aurelius links \(\underline{\alphaπ\varphi\alphaος}\) with \(\chiρ\varphi\alphaος\), not \(\alphaίων\).\(^{18}\) If Goldschmidt’s claim – there are two distinct accounts of time in Stoicism – is based merely on a terminological distinction, then his argument falters due to a lack of textual support.\(^{19}\)

Yet Deleuze pushes beyond Goldschmidt’s influence. Consider what Deleuze says: “The greatness of Stoic thought is to show at once the necessity [nécessité] of these two readings and their reciprocal exclusion.”\(^{20}\) While Deleuze follows Goldschmidt in affirming that the Stoics had two readings of time, he further contends that both are equally necessary, complementary, and
It is not simply that there are two understandings of time, but also that these two understandings converge in their very divergence.

We can refer to a standard Deleuzian distinction, one that has bubbled below the surface of our entire investigation, in order to make sense of the way in which these two theories of time both converge and diverge. Consider Sellars’ clever observation that there is another way to translate the phrase “κατὰ πλάτος” in the already-mentioned Stobaeus passage. Long and Sedley translate this as “broadly.” There is, however, another possible translation, one which Goldschmidt himself uses: l’entendue, extension. When we refer to the present as extended through and delimited by the living present of existing bodies, we see time according to extensive measurements: time as χρόνος, Chronos. Given an ongoing state of affairs, we can extensively circumscribe the present as having a finite duration. By contrast, when we consider the present not as extended but as eternally dislocated, as a continuously displaced and missing center, we consider time according to intensive measurements: time as αἰών, Aion.

What is it to measure time extensively or intensively? An extensive measurement of time is something like one minute, two days, three years, and so on. If we divide, for example, one hour in half, we get two half hours. The difference is a mere metric difference, that is there is no real change in kind between one hour, a half-hour, a quarter of an hour, an eighth of an hour, etc. Different extensive measurements are equal and homogenous, that is we can divide into them without changing the nature of what is being divided. An intensive measurement, by contrast, is more like pressure, temperature, or pitch. Such intensities cannot be divided or altered without a change in nature. If we lower the temperature of a gallon of water from 50 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit, we find what was liquid now is ice; if we raise the pitch of a tone by a whole step, we have a new note. Similarly, an intensively considered time is not composed of equal and homogenous parts, but of heterogeneous divisions, each of which is infinitely divisible. That is, intensive time is composed of an infinite future and infinite past, separated and connected by a limit, or what Deleuze often calls a singularity. The present does not exist, but instead subsists as “the instant without thickness and without extension,” a “pure perverse ‘moment,’” an ever-so-thin crack in time.

Chronos is thus the dimension of Stoic time that considers time extensively, while Aion is the dimension that considers time intensively. Chronos is time considered in terms of finite, limited quantities, while Aion is time considered in terms of infinite and unlimited intensities. Part of Deleuze’s insight is to demonstrate the simultaneous mutual exclusion and co-necessitation of both Chronos and Aion. Put differently, Deleuze is careful not to sacrifice extensity for intensity, Chronos for Aion, but to demonstrate their immanent relation. The exact nature of this relation is one of Deleuze’s greatest contributions to the history of philosophy: the intensive produces the extensive. The reason it is so difficult to see this is because the extensive covers up or hides the intensive grounds that produced it. In our case, Chronos hides Aion. It is through
Deleuze’s various encounters with figures from the history of philosophy, especially the Stoics, that this intensive-extensive distinction emerges. In the end, Deleuze’s encounter with the Stoics forces him to create concepts that show how the intensive and the extensive are two dimensions of the same theory of time. Chronos (extensive time) and Aion (intensive time) are two distinct readings of time, but the key is to see how they are necessary, complementary, and simultaneous understandings of a single incorporeal: time.

THE THREE CRACKED INCORPOREALS

We have now seen how Deleuze engages with some of the most provocative elements of Stoic ontology. Along the way, we have developed a rather unorthodox account of Stoicism, one that does not fully appear in Deleuze’s texts but that can be distilled from the contours of his encounter with this ancient Hellenistic school. This less-than-explicit account of the Deleuze-Stoicism encounter is reducible to two claims: there are only three, not four, incorporeals, and each incorporeal has an intensive and extensive dimension.

The reason why commentators usually assert that the Stoics postulated four kinds of incorporeals is reasonably based on the extant ancient texts. Still, we must never forget that none of these are recognized as originating directly from Zeno, Chrysippus, or any of the early Stoics. Our access to the early Stoic ideas thus must pass through various critical and doxographical filters, such as Stobaeus, Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius, and so on. Since we must rely on the accounts of the critics of the Stoics, we should always recall that these authors often write from partisan, polemical, or even uncharitable perspectives. It is thus likely that there are some, probably significant, differences between what the Stoics themselves thought and what their critics said about them. Remembering this provides sufficient space for the Deleuzian encounter.

It is in this little space that our unorthodox claim appears: there are three incorporeals in Stoicism, and each are split in two. While the extant texts on Stoicism, written by their critics, explicitly give four, not three, incorporeals, this reading of the Deleuze-Stoicism encounter has three distinct advantages. (1) It allays the confusion as to why place and void are considered separate types of incorporeals, when they seem to be rather two ways of understanding space. (2) It helps clarify the clever account of the Stoics’ materialist theory of language. (3) It addresses some of the concerns arising from the seemingly paradoxical accounts of time in Stoicism.

As we said, void and place are not simply two distinct concepts, two separate kinds of incorporeals, but instead are two distinct dimensions of a single concept: space. The difference is that place is space considered in terms of the finitude and limits of the bodies that occupy it, and void is space considered independently of bodies, and so as infinite and unlimited. In more Deleuzian language, place is extensive space and void is intensive space. Space is thus one kind of incorporeal, composed of two dimensions – void and place. Space
functions as that border without thickness separating void and place. We can twist one of Goldschmidt’s diagrams:

\[
\text{Void (infinite/intensive/incorporeal)} \quad \text{SPACE} \quad \text{Place (limited/extensive/corporeal)}
\]

\[\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\alpha\] are the second kind of incorporeal. While we have not gone into much detail about the \(\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\alpha\) in our discussion, much of *Logic of Sense* investigates the ways in which sense relates to linguistic propositions. For our purposes, it is enough to note that there are two dimensions of the \(\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\omicron\): the nominal and verbal. Verbs, especially infinitive and transfinite verbs, are infinite and unlimited \(\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\alpha\), and nouns are finite and limited \(\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\alpha\). In between is that same ever-so-thin frontier that enters “into the propositions themselves, between nouns and verbs, or, rather, between denotations and expressions.” In other words, verbs are intensively considered \(\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\alpha\) and nouns are extensively considered \(\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\alpha\). Although Goldschmidt does not diagram \(\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\omicron\), we can further transplant his diagram thus:

\[\text{Verb (infinite/intensive/incorporeal)} \quad \Lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\omicron\quad \text{Noun (limited/extensive/corporeal)}\]

Time is the third and final type of incorporeal. In the Deleuze-Stoicism encounter, there are two readings of time: Chronos and Aion. Chronos is finite and limited time, wherein only the present exists at a certain duration, while the past and future subsist. Aion, by contrast, is infinite and unlimited time, wherein the none of the present, past, or future exist, but all instead subsist. Put differently, Chronos is corporeal time and Aion is incorporeal time. In Deleuze’s terms, Chronos is extensive time and Aion is intensive time. What separates them? That paradoxical surface without thickness that operates throughout Stoic ontology. We can again twist, with yet more changes, Goldschmidt’s diagram:

\[\text{Aion (infinite/intensive/incorporeal)} \quad \text{TIME} \quad \text{Chronos (limited/extensive/corporeal)}\]
Let us add one more twist to these diagrams. Imagine this: take the ends of the intensive and extensive faces of each incorporeal, twist them and glue them together. We now have three Möbius strips, three paradoxical surfaces, each turning in unison. On each side of the strips are the finite, extended, bodily dimensions – place, noun, Chronos; on the other side are the endless, intensive, separated dimensions – void, verb, Aion. Each side constantly turns into and out of each other.

In conclusion, as place is occupied space and void is unoccupied space, Chronos is filled time and Aion is empty time. As Deleuze says, “Chronos is filled up with states of affairs and the movements of the objects that it measures. But being an empty and unfolded form of time, the Aion subdivides ad infinitum that which haunts it without ever inhabiting it.” To this we can add: nouns are filled λεκτά and verbs are empty λεκτά. Nouns are filled by states of affairs (for example, when a denotation corresponds to a state of affairs, it is considered true), while verbs are endlessly empty or displace themselves. Taken together, space, time, and λεκτόν are the three incorporeals in the Deleuze-Stoic encounter. Separating and connecting each of them is that sinuous Stoic surface. Stoic ontology, expressed in its encounter with Deleuze, constructs a dynamic organization composed of intensive and extensive dimensions separated and connected by a single boundary line.

Through it all, paradoxes are not explained away but instead retained for their power to produce a new distribution of thought. The Stoic insistence on retaining the productive promise of paradoxes without recourse to transcendent forms or eternal causes is what, Deleuze argues, makes them innovative initiators of a new image of the philosopher, one that runs counter to Platonism and Aristotelianism. This “new image,” Deleuze contends, “is already closely linked to the paradoxical constitution of the theory of sense,” and, we here add, space and time. These three incorporeals are paradoxically structured by the slight Stoic surface separating and connecting their respective extensive and intensive dimensions. It is through this strange account of the incorporeals in Stoic ontology, along with several other paradoxically constituted theories, that the Stoics become the initiators of a new image of philosophy that spawns a lineage of thought leading, eventually, to Deleuze himself.

NOTES

2. Ibid. 15.64. While Socrates, just prior to his death, asked that a cock be sacrificed to Asclepius, Seneca offered the liquid of the water in which he died as a drink-offering to Jupiter the Liberator; see Plato, *Phaedo*, 118a.
4. The account of Deleuze’s death can be found, among other places, in André Pierre Colombat, “November 4, 1995: Deleuze’s Death as an Event,” which draws a similar line from Stoic deaths to Deleuze’s own.

5. Deleuze, Logic of Sense [LS], p. 156; Deleuze here points to Maurice Blanchot, L’Espace Littéraire [Blanchot], pp. 104–5.


7. Double Herm of Socrates and Seneca, Inv. No. Sk 391 (R 106) (Berlin: State Museums, Pergamon Museum, c.300–350 AD). In 1813, this double-sided portrait – showing two male heads, back to back – was unearthed in Rome: one was clearly labeled, in Greek, “Socrates,” the other, in Latin, “Seneca.” See James Romm, Dying Every Day: Seneca at the Court of Nero.

8. Seneca, Selected Philosophical Letters [Letters], “Letter to Lucilius,” 58.15. See also the invaluable collection from Anthony Long and David Sedley, The Hellenistic Philosophers [THP], 27A (for subsequent references to texts from Long and Sedley’s collection I will cite the text’s location both in THP and, parenthetically, in its original source; other places I cite Long and Sedley’s commentary through a reference to the page numbers of the pertinent volume).


10. THP 30E (Simplicius, On Aristotle’s Categories, 105, 8–16). Vanessa de Harven, The Coherence of Stoic Ontology, has developed an interesting reading of this third category, which is neither corporeal nor incorporeal, and so expresses a second kind of subsistence.

11. Letters 58.18. This move is significant, for it prepares the way for the affirmation of the reality only of individuals or singular things, and the denial of the reality of universals. Spinoza, an early modern Stoic and member of Deleuze’s so-called “minor tradition,” later makes this move in Book II of his Ethics.


13. Émile Bréhier, La Théorie des Incorporels dans l’Ancien Stoicism [Bréhier], p.10. The other major influence on Deleuze’s Stoicism is Victor Goldschmidt, whom we address below.

14. THP vol. 1, pp. 162–6. The Stoic theory of incorporeals is reminiscent of Meinong’s intriguing ontology, which postulates an ontological state between existence and non-existence, which he calls subsistence (bestehen); see Alexius Meinong, Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit.

15. John Sellars, Stoicism, p. 84; unless otherwise noted, all emphases in quotations are from the original text.


17. Cicero, Academica, 1.39; trans. Charles Brittain, slightly modified. See also THP 45A.

18. LS p. 20.

19. Ibid. p. 6.
The entailment of ethics from ontology is a constant theme in the figures with whom Deleuze had his most important encounters. Think of, for example, the continuous movement from metaphysics to ethics or ethics to metaphysics in Spinoza and Nietzsche, two later Stoic sympathizers.

In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze also uses the Möbius strip imagery to describe both Stoicism and Lewis Carroll (*LS* pp. 11, 20, 123, 337).

In fact, a Möbius strip is helpful for thinking about many features of Stoicism, for example their innovations in logic, their productive use of paradoxes, their formulation of an eternal recurrence, and so on.

We can understand this process through what Deleuze calls the dynamic genesis of language. Language is made possible by means of “that which separates sounds from bodies and organizes them into propositions, freeing them for the expressive function” (*LS* p. 181). Deleuze articulates three separate stages in this genesis: (1) The primary order of language is sounded out in the depths of bodies, in the guttural cries, cracklings, and burstings of noise erupting out of the sonorous cavities of the body. The clearest examples of this are the noises of an infant. The body of an infant is not a clearly defined and controlled entity, but is rather a disorganized collection of intensities, which emit screams, farts, piss, and various bodily flows. There is no sense to these sounds. They are just noises. It is no coincidence that the infant is the first example of the body-without-organs in *Anti-Oedipus*. (2) Out of the clanging, incoherent noise, the tertiary arrangement emerges. The infant begins to pick up on a repeated sound. The voice of a parent emerges as a “voice from above”: “from noises as [. . .] passions of bodies in depth, to the voice as the entity of the heights” (*LS* p. 229). Although the child does not yet have access to the domain of sense lurking within this “familial hum of voices” (ibid.), it does discern a pre-existing and organized system of sounds. The tertiary arrangement of language is the pre-formed system of meaningful words and sentences. (3) The question thus concerns how to move from non-language to language, from noise to meaning. Deleuze’s answer is the secondary organization of language, the site of sense (and nonsense). It is called “secondary” not simply to confuse but in order to locate an element of language that lies between the pure noise of the primary order and the meaningful voice of the tertiary arrangement.

Bréhier pp. 11–12; as quoted in *LS* p. 5.
33. LS p. 151.
34. Ibid. p. 152.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid. p. 156.
37. Ibid. p. 19.
38. Ibid. p. 20.
39. Sextus uses the name “Dion,” but I replaced this with “Deleuze” in keeping with the theme of the essay.
40. Sextus Empiricus, Against the Professors, 8.11–12; as quoted in Sellars, Stoicism, pp. 61–2. See also THP 33B.
41. Stoics make a further distinction between complete and incomplete λεκτά. Incomplete λεκτά are words or phrases that only indicate the potential for sense but do not contain sense, for example, “. . . has died.” Bréhier defines incomplete λεκτά as “verbs without subjects,” and a complete λεκτόν as a “verb accompanied by its subject” (Bréhier, p. 17). Complete λεκτά convey a sense such that it prevents the need to ask “Who?,” Who “has died”? “Deleuze has died.”
42. Aristotle, Physics, IV.11, 219b1–2.
43. THP 51A (Simplicius, On Aristotle’s Categories, 350, 15–16).
44. Consider THP 51B (Stobaeus, 1.106, 5–23).
45. THP 51B (Stobaeus, 1.106, 5–23).
46. THP 50A (Stobaeus 1.142, 2–6).
47. THP 51B (Stobaeus, 1.106, 5–23).
48. LS p. 63.
49. THP 51B (Stobaeus 1.106, 5–23); I have opted for “exist” to translate ὑπάρχειν, here and in the next quotation, rather than Long and Sedley’s choice of “belong.”
50. THP 51B (Stobaeus 1.106, 5–23).
51. LS p. 162.
52. THP p. 51C (Plutarch, On Common Conceptions, 1081c–1082a).
53. LS p. 6.
54. Ibid. 5.
55. Deleuze, Negotiations, 5–6; emphasis added.
57. John Sellars also points to this, in “Aiôn and Chronos” [“AC”], p. 17. The passage Goldschmidt has in mind is Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 4.3.
58. In both Meditations 2.14 and 10.31 Marcus uses the phrase “in infinite time [ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ χρόνῳ].”
60. LS p. 61.
61. LS pp. 5, 61.
62. “Consequently no time is present exactly, but it is broadly [κατὰ πλάτος] said to be so”; *THP* 51B.

63. Sellars records the various ways scholars have translated this phrase, including both Goldschmidt and Hadot (“AC” p. 15).

64. *DR* p. 237.


67. This discussion appears mostly in Series 3–12 of *The Logic of Sense*, but especially in the examination of the four dimensions of the proposition: denotation, manifestation, signification, and sense.

68. *LS* p. 182. For more on Deleuze’s account of denotation, as well as the corresponding features of the proposition – manifestation, signification, sense – see the “Third Series of the Proposition,” *LS* pp. 12–22.

69. Goldschmidt p. 39.

70. *LS* p. 64.

71. Ibid. p. xiv.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


